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**Annual Report on Education**  
**in the Malayan Union for the**  
**period 1st April, 1946, to 31st**  
**December, 1946**

BY

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# ANNUAL REPORT ON EDUCATION IN THE MALAYAN UNION FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL, 1946, TO 31ST DECEMBER, 1946.

## PART I.

NOTE.—The last complete Annual Report was compiled in respect of the year 1938. Short summaries were prepared for each of the war years up to and including 1940. No report was of course possible for 1941.

It was customary to print in Part I of the Annual Report a survey of the history and present administrative system of the Department. Owing to present conditions it is considered sufficient to give a short retrospect of conditions in 1941 with an account of such conditions during the Japanese occupation as are known, and of the rehabilitation carried out under the British Military Administration.

Part I of this report, therefore, consists of a retrospect dealing with events up to 1st April, 1946, the beginning of the period to which the report proper refers. There is also in each section a short historical preface dealing with details peculiar to the particular sub-department concerned.

### HISTORICAL RETROSPECT.

The 1941 school year ended on 4th December, 1941. It had been a successful year in spite of the war. A number of school buildings had of course been requisitioned by the British Forces, but those that were still in the hands of school authorities were for the most part in good shape. Staffs were highly trained and all principals were looking forward to large enrolments and great enthusiasm in 1942.

During the year, the second year of a two-year course for the training of teachers in private schools and the training of English teachers in Chinese schools was completed. In Kuala Lumpur, over a hundred locally-recruited English school teachers were undergoing an intensive course in phonetics. Trade schools were busy with their programme of turning out 500 mechanics per year for the Royal Air Force as well as mechanics for the other services. All schools according to their capacity were doing war work of one kind or another. The marks of war on the Department of Education were even more distinct in 1941 than they had been in the previous years. All Volunteer Forces, to which a large proportion of the European and locally-recruited English and Malay school teaching staffs belonged, had been embodied for two periods of two months' military service. The 2nd (Selangor) Battalion, F.M.S.V.F., had, in addition, been mobilized for nearly three weeks during a period of labour unrest. By the end of the year practically all staffs, men and women, had joined the local defence corps or one of the Passive Defence Services and many senior pupils were similarly engaged.

In spite of the war clouds, optimism had not failed. Government was about to open in Kuala Lumpur a Malay Girls' College parallel to the Malay College (for boys) at Kuala Kangsar and two aided schools—the Lady Treacher Girls' School at



Taiping and the Anglo-Chinese (Boys') School at Malacca—had just taken over capacious new buildings, and at one school, at least—the English College, Johore Bharu—there lay £1,500 worth of science equipment waiting to be unpacked.

Events appeared to be moving fast when the Volunteer Forces were mobilized on 1st December, a date which coincided with the beginning of the 1941 School Certificate Examination. Arrangements were hurriedly made to release the Volunteer personnel concerned and to avoid any interruption of the examinations. Candidates wrote their answer scripts during the latter part of the examination through the noises of war, and it is surprising that results were as good as they proved. From Penang, which was overrun early in the campaign, some of the scripts did not reach Cambridge at all.

As the Japanese overran the country, the teachers in the armed forces and in the Passive Defence Forces were withdrawn with their units, so that towards the end a large proportion of the staff of the Department was concentrated in Singapore. At the fall of Singapore, a few of the European staff managed to escape, a few more were on leave and had not yet been recalled; the remainder of the European staff and some of the locally-recruited staff were interned.

As the Japanese occupied town after town, the school buildings, except those of the Catholic religious orders, were looted.

In all centres it was the same story of the looting or burning of school libraries and equipment and the disappearance of anything of value, especially furniture, which could be used. The Japanese completed the process by tearing down doors and windows for fuel for their kitchens. Only in a few cases were school principals or individual teachers able to save any school property and even then it was at the risk of their lives. In one or two cases, such as at Bandar Hilir English School, Malacca, the buildings were occupied by enemy troops without delay and a certain amount of property was saved. Few centres managed to save records or office files, and most of the pre-occupation history of the Department has been compiled from the memories of the staff, from the few records available and from material in the Colonial Office. The missionary staffs of the Catholic religious schools except that of the Penang Convent, where its members were forced to leave, remained at their schools. As a consequence, much of their equipment and furniture was saved including at St. Michael's Institution, Ipoh, practically all of the science equipment. Some of the Christian Brothers were interned at Bahau and some were allowed to stay on in their schools.

The fall of Singapore marked the beginning of three and a half years of educational twilight throughout the country. Most of the rural schools were left untouched but they did not work for some time. Larger urban school buildings suffered as they always do in war time. They were used as barracks, stores and machine shops; a few were turned into military and naval training centres. The French Convent, Penang, became an internment centre mainly for captured merchant seamen and the pathetic messages of internees written on its walls may still be seen. Some schools, notably the King Edward VII School, Taiping,

and two in Pahang, will long be remembered in Malaya as Kempei-tai (Secret Police or Gestapo) Headquarters. The fittings for the dreaded water treatment and the bamboo beating-rods were still in the first school when it was reopened.

Staff losses during hostilities and the occupation period were not slight. The heaviest losses were incurred in the slaughter of Chinese in Singapore just after the cessation of hostilities and in the wanton murder of teachers, mainly Eurasians, by the Japanese in Johore. Three and a half years of insufficient food, ill-treatment, oppression and terror played havoc not only with the education of children but with school staffs. Teachers received more than the usual share of attention; it was perhaps to be expected that teachers in English schools would be carefully watched. There were doubtless many unsung heroes of the occupation period but of one, Mr. P. G. Pamadasa of Malacca, details are known. This teacher on the staff of St. Francis' Institution, Malacca, was found to have disseminated wireless news among his friends. Pamadasa defied his Japanese judges and was condemned to be hanged. In his cell on the night before he was to die he wrote:

"I am writing this in my cell with manacled hands on the eve of my execution. I am no felon but a patriot condemned to death for listening to the B.B.C. news and telling it to pro-British friends. I did this for two years till I was betrayed. The Japanese Military Police tortured and finally sentenced me to be hanged.

"I helped to keep up the morale of our people and there are many to say so. Had I lived I would have been rewarded. I have no regrets. It is sweet to die for freedom. My good brother Mahindasa ably backed me in this. I leave it to the British Government to reward him suitably. I have always cherished British sportsmanship, justice and the Civil Service as the finest things in an imperfect world. I die for these.

"I die gladly for freedom. My enemies fail to conquer my soul. I forgive them for what they did to my poor frail body . . . to my dear old boys, tell them their teacher died with a smile on his lips . . . . ."

The general Japanese policy was that vernacular schools for Malays and Indians should continue as before the occupation with Japanese teaching added to the syllabus. No Chinese schools were permitted but Government-managed Nippon-go (Japanese language) schools were instituted and attended by Chinese children and children of other races as well. Special historical notes on these schools have been added to this report in Chapter IV. Schools in most cases were reopened by July, 1942. Some of the original staffs accepted employment mainly because that was the only means of escaping starvation and was also a way by which they avoided, and protected their families from, unpleasant attention from Japanese officials. Many, however, were prepared to go to any lengths to avoid such employment, preferring to peddle cakes or to drive bullock-carts. English schools were also converted into Nippon-go (Japanese language) schools and the teaching of English was theoretically prohibited. Teachers attended special three-month courses in Japanese in central schools but few made serious attempts to



learn the language. The curriculum in the Gekkos, as the schools were called, was mainly Nippon-go (Japanese), singing, Japanese physical training and gardening. There was of course little enthusiasm for this, and all kinds of subterfuges were adopted of which it is difficult to believe that the Japanese visiting officials were unaware. In order to avoid investigation, for instance, the Reverend Mother of the Convent, Kuala Lumpur, herself professed to be teaching Japanese to her religious staff but she never got beyond one show lesson, which was of course produced at inspections. At one Malacca school camouflaged teaching reached its highest pitch of perfection when staff and pupils learned one single sentence which was repeated over and over again when Japanese inspecting officers appeared at the school. But even though teaching in English was continued, either surreptitiously or with the Japanese authorities winking at it, conditions became so unfavourable that enrolment gradually fell off. In any case, girls over fifteen years of age were discouraged from remaining in girls' schools since the Japanese said that at fifteen they should be out and at work. By 1944, staffs frequently outnumbered the pupils and some schools eventually closed. Malay schools kept going in a very half-hearted way except in the Northern States where the Siamese Government allowed them to function as before. Japanese Inspectors were generally afraid or unwilling to inspect schools in the countryside and were misled by the reports of the teachers which painted conditions in the schools as being far more satisfactory than they actually were. Very few Indian vernacular schools kept open since these were mainly on estates.

The Japanese increased the number of Trade Schools but little reliable information is available about their work. It is clear that they were little else but excuses for cheap child labour.

After the evacuation of Kuala Lumpur, the Technical College was looted and later occupied by Japanese troops. Much valuable laboratory equipment and technical apparatus were lost. The reference library, in particular, suffered drastic losses, and after the Japanese surrender and before the arrival of British troops the college was again looted. Some furniture and equipment which escaped the attention of looters and the Japanese military forces, were saved by the efforts of the staff on the two occasions. In May, 1942, the Japanese authorities recalled the teaching staff and reopened the college for technical training. The curriculum at first remained unaltered from pre-war days but the training gradually deteriorated both in scope and attainment and at the end of the Japanese occupation the most important subject of the curriculum was Japanese. The standard for admission was lowered and among the new students were many far below the normal standard of attainment required, some from Standard VI or even lower.

On the 28th August, 1945, in some parts of the Peninsula permission was given to schools to resume teaching in English. Teachers construed this relaxation in its true sense and prepared for release from Japanese oppression.

On the arrival of the British Military Administration in September, 1945, only two European Education Officers were available for educational work. The Civil Affairs Officers were



instructed to open schools without delay under local supervision. The parents and children of Malaya owe a very great debt to the locally-recruited staff and to the missionary staffs of the Catholic teaching orders for their enthusiastic and unselfish work in the early days of the liberation. In spite of ill-health, malnutrition and lack of all kinds of furniture and equipment, these teachers rapidly reopened the schools. As one inspecting officer puts it, "by remarkable devotion, marked ingenuity and strenuous teaching" the local staffs got the schools working without delay.

The first task of the Department of Education under the British Military Administration was to restore as far as possible the pre-war facilities in education. This meant a heavy programme covering the following items: the reopening of schools and of the training colleges and the Technical College; provision of staff; repairs to and replacements of furniture and buildings; replacement of textbooks and teaching equipment and science apparatus; compensation for the loss of nearly four years of education; arrangements for over-age and otherwise unsuitable pupils; re-introduction of external examinations; restoration of extra-mural activities; the training of teachers and, of course, the extension of these activities to the old Unfederated Malay States. The devotion of the staff on one hand and a passionate desire for education on the other enabled progress to be made without delay. The following figures of total enrolment in the Peninsula tell the story up to the end of the period of British Military Administration:

| Schools.    | Dec., 1941. | Jan., 1946. | March, 1946. |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| English ... | 32,382 ...  | 58,633 ...  | 60,422       |
| Malay ...   | 122,199 ... | 118,474 ... | 120,197      |
| Chinese ... | 83,200 ...  | 77,337 ...  | 110,195      |
| Indian ...  | 25,573 ...  | 11,806 ...  | 18,470       |
| Total ...   | 263,354 ... | 266,250 ... | 309,284      |

The enrolments of Malay schools suffered because of lack of food and clothes and because children were required to help with the paddy crop. The majority of Indian schools were estate schools and these did not open for the most part until the managers returned.

It will be seen from the figures that enrolments in English schools show the increase caused by lack of facilities for nearly four years. In January, 1946, schools were faced with new admissions for a total of five separate years, and fewer school buildings than the pre-war number in which to accommodate them. Buildings were used in two sessions and all kinds of other buildings were pressed into service. A large number of temporary teachers was required and parallel primary classes were organized in all schools. Arrangements were made to keep classification fluid and by the end of the period much had been done to re-classify primary pupils and spread them out over the lower classes.

The occupation had left a heritage of psychological difficulties in respect of some pupils. The Japanese encouraged the weakening of moral fibre and it redounds to the credit of the tradition of the schools and to the character of the local staff that